

JOLIET JUNIOR COLLEGE

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

FAYETTE B. SHAW

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JOLIET JUNIOR COLLEGE

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

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December 17, 1973
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INTERVIEWEE: Fayette B. Shaw

INTERVIEWER: Mr. Robert Sterling

STERLING: This is an interview with Fayette B. Shaw at his home in Mokena, Illinois on November 5, 1973. The interview is being done for the Joliet Junior College Oral History Program.

STERLING: Mr. Shaw, why don't we begin by your telling me when and where you were born?

SHAW: I was born December 3, 1903, so I'll be seventy in less than a month. I can hardly believe it, cause I feel like ninety. /Laughter/

STERLING: You look like fifty! /Laughter/

SHAW: Well, my father was Everett C. Shaw, whose father came from the East somewhere, I guess in New York State, least before the Civil War. And grandfather Shaw, who is also named Fayette B. Shaw, but we have different middle names, had a shoe store on Jefferson Street across from the court house. That building has been torn down now. He could take a hide, cure it, cut it up, and make shoes right from the very beginning. He was in it with his brother, Elijah. There were several brothers and sisters in the Shaw family in that generation, but we knew only Uncle Elijah who was the only Shaw that lived in Joliet, of our relatives. When grandfather Shaw broke up the shop, some of his solid walnut counters were made into unbelievably uncomfortable chairs and a very attractive library table, which my brother has. He refinished it, and it's beautiful. He has it at his summer place in Michigan. And this clock case, this is a Seth Thomas works. This clock is probably seventy years old, but I can't find out from Seth Thomas how old the

works are; they won't write me.

STERLING: Is that right?

SHAW: I gave them the serial number, and they haven't replied.

STERLING: Who made the cabinet?

SHAW: A man by the name of Louis Kolman, K-o-l-m-a-n-, made the cabinet way, way back. I think it's not quite as old as I am, but it has been in the family as long as I can remember. We are quite proud of it. Elijah had two daughters, maiden ladies, "Lavender and Old Lace", who never had age or legs. They were as mid-Victorian as you can imagine. There isn't even a date on their gravestones.

STERLING: Is that right?

SHAW: But because my grandmother tattled, I knew how old they were, /Laughter/ in spite of them. They are dead these many years; however, they lived in a spacious Victorian home on Buell Avenue, which is still standing, though Buell is not the nice street that it used to be. My father was forced to take law by his domineering mother. He passed the Bar and he was a member of the Bar for over fifty years, but he never practiced law. He was a court reporter in a Circuit Court from 1899 to about 1934. According to what I have always heard, he was a very good court reporter. He worked under only two or three judges because they were long-tenure judges at the time, Judge Dorrance Dibell and Judge Frederick A. Hill. Well, anyway, he lived here all his life and married Jennie Baldwin, who was raised on a farm on Maple Street. It was Maple Street in those days; and it was lined with maple trees, most

of which have died and not been replaced. It was a beautiful street, but they never were systematically replaced as they died; and they should have been. The farm was later bought by Ted Corp and remained in the Corp family until just recently, the last year or so. The story about my mother's family is this: somewhere in our history there was a woman known as Grandmother Hale. I don't know how many generations back she was, but she had four husbands in succession and children by three of them. After the death of the fourth husband, she left New York State, I think, with the children of the three marriages and came West in a wagon along about 1837. They came through here; and as they went down what is now Maple Street, the children, sons and daughters, as they went along, selected the land that they wanted to farm on Maple Street. Eventually, they all got the farms that they wanted and lived there on Maple Street. Now, as I say, I do not know how many generations from Grandmother Hale to me, but Grandmother Hale is buried in the Higginbotham Cemetery. The Higginbotham Cemetery on . . . I could have told you that road, but I forgot. Anyway, it's off East Washington Street, in there. I couldn't find her gravestone; it's been worn down by erosion during the years, and I couldn't read it. But anyway she is still lying there, I'm sure. There is no place to go. [Laughter] We had a lot of cousins one way or another. Well, now that is the early history there.

STERLING: And you were born in 1903?

SHAW: I came along in 1903.

STERLING: What are some of your earliest memories of this area?

SHAW: Well, I went to the Longfellow School on Grover Street, which has been closed and demolished and a fire station built on the site now. Then I went to the old Richard Street School, Richard Street and Fourth Avenue; that was torn down and replaced later by the new Washington School. It was new then. Then I went down to the Central School, which stood where the Sears store stands. Then to Joliet Township High School, which is now the Central Campus; there was only one. Then to the Junior College, which was in the high school building. And I went on from there to the University of Illinois and graduated from there.

STERLING: Then you went to Harvard, didn't you?

SHAW: Then I went to Harvard and got a masters and doctorate in economics and finance. I have been teaching all my life since--I hope it was teaching.

STERLING: Where did you teach?

SHAW: Well, I was a part-time substitute in Joliet High School and Junior College. I had one year as a lowly assistant at Urbana at the University; three years at Beloit College at Beloit, Wisconsin; two years at the University of Toledo, Toledo, Ohio; fifteen years at DePaul University in Chicago; and then I went over to the University of Illinois in Chicago in 1954. It was then on Navy Pier; and I went to the New Campus, when the Chicago Circle Campus was opened and stayed there until I retired.

STERLING: When did you retire?

SHAW: I retired on September 1, 1971, and went back and taught one

course in the winter quarter, '72, and I haven't done any teaching since. This is off the record, but I think I'll ask Mr. Boudreau if he can give me a class in some kind of finance in adult education beginning in January, if my wife will let me. /Laughter/

STERLING: I am sure you are eminently qualified.

SHAW: Well, I can do that.

STERLING: Where did you live as a youngster?

SHAW: As a youngster--I was born in Joliet and I grew up on the corner of Union and Second; the house faced Union Street. It is in better condition now than when we lived in it.

STERLING: Is that right? That's not true of most of those houses, though is it?

SHAW: No, it isn't; but it has been kept up in splendid shape with some addition at the back. We sold that about 1946. We have a summer place in Michigan, which I've had since 1907. That goes back a long time, too.

STERLING: Where about in Michigan?

SHAW: Frankfort. Have you ever heard of it? Have you ever heard of the National Music Camp, Interlochen?

STERLING: Yes, I lived in Bear Lake for a while; that's near Manistee.

SHAW: Oh, yes. Well, Bear Lake is only twenty-five miles from Frankfort, yes. Well, Mr. Spicer was assistant superintendent of the high school, under J. Stanley Brown. He had come from Frankfort where he lived as a

boy. He was born in New York State in 1869, I think. He always wanted to go back there for summers. He got us, my father, interested. Father's work in the court, gave him practically the summer free. So Mr. Spicer, my father, and J. Stanley Brown and V.D. Hawkins bought some lots on Crystal Lake and built cottages up there. I thought it was 1907, but Brown's son Grant, who is still living, says that their first year up there was 1906. Undoubtedly, he knows when they went up there first. I thought we all went together, but I guess the Shaws went a year later. Anyway, the Browns' and the Shaws' and the Spicers' descendents still own the lots on Crystal Lake. Crystal Lake has gone to wealth. It's a rich man's playground. /Laughter/ We wouldn't be buying now if we hadn't owned that land from way, way back. Lake frontage unimproved lots are selling at \$300.00 a front foot. No sewer, no water. Electricity is available and telephones, but I wouldn't be able to afford to buy in now. But since we owned it from way, way back, it's reasonably okay. although our taxes rise every year. Now, I don't know what else I can tell you that is going to help, that are not in the book that I have written. I started it in 1829, because that was the date of the first cabin built on this site of Joliet, and I ended it in 1870 because that was the date when outside capital came in and started what became the steelmills. Now, of course, in every frontier settlement the settlers brought in some outside capital when they came. But the idea was in the steelmills that here were outside capitalists looking for a location, and they lit on Joliet for the steelmills. When I was growing up, there on Union Street, at night the sky was always crimson--the Bessemer converters. I thought that was beautiful. /Laughter/ Now it's air pollution. What was beautiful then is now air pollution, but the Bessemer converter has gone out. The open

hearth and the basic oxygen process have taken the place of the Bessemer converter. But it was a most spectacular thing from outside; and when I visited the steelmills as a boy, it was as spectacular to look at in the steel plant. We were allowed to go through on conducted tours, and I did that. Well, there had been local industry there before that. Stone quarrying and, of course, the railroads represented a good deal of outside capital, although local businessmen had put their money into the Rock Island and so on. And they put their money in also in the canal boats. But here was a big plant growing up, and it required more than just local capital could provide. So I thought well, my book was getting too large anyhow, /Laughter/ that was a good place to stop; and that's what I did. I wish someone would go on and going back to the sources and census so on and bring it up to date.

STERLING: That's a good project.

SHAW: It would be more voluminous than it is now. But after that you you have the immigrants from Middle and Southern Europe, the Hungarians and the Italians and the Russians. All those from what was the Austrian-Hungarian Empire and Italians and so on. Before 1870 you had a lot from England, from Germany, from Ireland, the British Isles and Germany and a good many Scandinavians; but, as you know from the immigration movement, Middle Europe and Southern Europe contributed a great deal in the later nineteenth century. A lot of those people came in here then. I think Harry Atkinson's father came from England and was one of the foremen or something in an industry here. It was Yankee and English engineers that built the canals; but the Irish were on the dirty end of the shovel and the wheelbarrow. From these Eastern railroads and the Erie

Canal a lot of those engineers built this I& M Canal, which was very important in those days, and then the Rock Island Railroad. But the Irishmen were the wheelbarrow and shovel brigade. They were hard-drinking, fighting lot. There was a Father Murphy, an Irish priest, who was quite influential here; and when there would be an outbreak of rioting along the canal, he would wade right in with the horsewhip.

STERLING: Is that right? /Laughter/

SHAW: He could bring law and order out of chaos in nothing flat once he got there. Unfortunately, Father Murphy was out on an errand of mercy one night, I guess riding home on horseback in a snow storm, when he ran full tilt into a low hanging limb of a tree and killed himself.

STERLING: Is that right?

SHAW: It was just too bad, really. He was a fine citizen. Well, of course, after the canal was built and after the Rock Island was built, the floating population of the Irish went on to the next construction job. The state went broke over the canal and issued a canal script, IOU's that weren't much good. They could be accepted by storekeepers at a great discount, but they could be accepted in full face value in buying canal lands. The government granted alternate sections to the canal trustees, like the railroad land grants; and that canal script could be accepted in full face value in purchasing land. So the Irish that wanted to settle down could buy land. The more settled Irish did, and the boys that were roustabouts and fighters went on. It was said that the fellows from one country in Ireland would get into a fight with the fellows from another country for no reason at all and just start bashing each others' heads

in, especially if they had got too much rot gut whiskey. If you were to look into the surveyor's map, you would see the boundary lines. I think they call it the Indian Boundary Line. I may be confused here, but there are two parallel lines between Chicago and I guess somewhere around Utica and Marsailles which were the canal lands. There are surveyor's plats here. I think they're called the Indian Boundary Lines because there were Indian treaties signed. That land along that route was taken over by the Washington government and there had always been hopes that there would be a waterway built between Lake Michigan and the Illinois River for transportation. I may be confused about that Indian Boundary Line, but I know this, that the canal trustees had a land grant and that land grant set the pattern for the land grants for the Illinois Central, Union Pacific Railroad, the Northern Pacific, the Santa Fe, and the Southern Pacific. Every other section in a checkerboard effect belonged to the canal or to the railroad. Then the alternate sections could be sold to private individuals by the U.S. government. Now I don't believe that that canal grant was the first. I think it had been done in the East somewhere, but I'm not sure of that. Possibly on the Merrimack Canal in New England, but I'm not sure of that. I wonder if you came across this bit of history. A man who deserved more fame than he got lived here in Joliet, Samuel B. Reed. Have you heard of him?

STERLING: I've heard of Charles Reed.

SHAW: No. Charles Reed built one of the early saw mills.

STERLING: Right.

SHAW: Samuel B. Reed was a different person. He had been an engineer on,

I guess, the Erie Canal. Then he was locating engineer on the Rock Island, locating a railroad from Chicago to the West. Now, I don't know how far West. He lived on Eastern Avenue one block south of Second Avenue. He also located the Union Pacific Railroad over the Rocky Mountains. I knew Mrs. Hyde and Mrs. Bennett who were daughters of his. Mrs. Hyde told me that whenever there is any suggestion of wrong doing in contracts, her father would have nothing to do with it. You know that credit moblier was a disgrace. Samuel B. Reed had no part in that. When sometime a contractor suggested a kick-back, Mr. Reed, who was a gentle soul, would pick up and throw him out of the office. /Laughter/ She said that in the investigation in Congress, of the Union Pacific afterwards, whenever they came to a contract signed by Samuel B. Reed, they passed on because they knew they didn't have to investigate that. That was a wonderful reputation to have. He was a man of absolute integrity. Well, he retired in Joliet . . . There was Cornelius C. Van Horn who came to Joliet and was Joliet's first mayor. He died in one of the several epidemics of cholera that hit the city. He had a son, William, who built the Canadian Pacific across the Rocky Mountains and he was knighted by Queen Victoria. Sir William telegraphed Samuel B. Reed asking him to locate the CPR across the Rocky Mountains. So, Mr. Reed didn't like to turn down a good friend. So he quoted a preposterous figure that he knew would not be accepted. So Sir William telegraphed back, "Report for duty at once." /Laughter/ His bluff was called. Mr. Reed had to go out on that job. He located the Canadian Pacific; there were a couple of spiral tunnels out there across the Selkirk Mountains in western Canada. Have you ever been in the Canadian Rockies?

STERLING: No.

SHAW: I think the Canadian Rockies are the most beautiful scenery in North America. The Canadian Pacific Railroad takes you through some of the finest scenery to be found anywhere. I've ridden the Canadian Pacific Railroad a couple of times. I'm a railroad fan anyway, and I've got a kind of soft spot in my heart for it, especially since I knew Sam Reed had laid it out there. I don't know anything about Mr. Reed's later history, but he raised his family here in Joliet. Now one of the daughters married Colonel Fred Bennett. I don't know what Fred Bennett was a colonel in, but I guess he was in the Spanish-American War. My father studied Law under him. There is a Fred Bennett who was with the Gas Company and worked over in Aurora and lived down near. . . Dresden Heights. I don't know whether he was a son or a grandson of Colonel Bennett, son, perhaps, just a bit on the pompous side. When I was writing my thesis, it seems to me I borrowed a diary of Mr. Reed's and I returned it to Mrs. Hyde. But Fred Bennett always suspected that I never returned it. I know I did because it would have been in my memory and on my conscience if I hadn't. I couldn't remember when I returned it or where, but this came up later; he said that they didn't have it, they didn't know where it was. I am sure I returned whatever it was I borrowed. I've forgotten what it was now. If he is still living, one of your students ought to contact him.

STERLING: His name is Fred Bennett?

SHAW: Fred Bennett. He would be a little older than I am.

STERLING: Is he living in Joliet or Aurora?

SHAW: He would be living down in Dresden Heights in a rural setting. He

was with Western United Gas Company, which I suppose now is the Northern Illinois Gas. Mr. Hyde who married another daughter of Samuel B. Reed was in the flour milling business, and he went to Australia as an engineer. He set up flour mills there; and one son of his, at least, and maybe another became a high executive in one of the Minneapolis Flour Milling companies. I don't believe there are any Hydes in Joliet anymore. They lived next door south of this Bennett. Mrs. Bennett and Mrs. Hyde were sisters. But over in the West Side there's a Reed Street that was for Mr. Reed, and the Reed subdivision in the Will County Plats and the Joliet City Plats was, I guess, laid out by the family. I don't exactly know. Anyway they were quite prominent here in the earlier generation.

STERLING: That would be Samuel Reed, rather than Charles.

SHAW: Yes; Charles Reed, I don't think he stayed around very much, I'm not sure. Charles established one of the early saw mills on the river.

STERLING: And built one of the first log cabins, supposedly.

SHAW: Yes. But that wasn't the same Reed.

STERLING: How long did you live in Joliet before you went away to school and then took various other jobs?

SHAW: I was here from 1903 until 1924 and then I went to the University of Illinois.

STERLING: You were in school during the depression?

SHAW: Yes, I was. I taught at Beloit from 1934 to 1937 and then in Toledo from 1937 to 1939. Then when I came back, I taught at DePaul. I lived at home again from 1939 to 1954. I lived in Joliet continuously

ever since, riding the Rock Island, 1939 to 1954. And then I married; I married rather late. I'm a railroad fan, I never minded commuting. The only thing I didn't like was when the alarm went off so early in the morning. /Laughter/ Riding a a train has never been a bore to me; I find it restful, believe it or not, even before air conditioning. My wife Marian and I had a nice, long trip in the summer of 1959 from here out to Seattle, stopping in Helena, Montana, and going down San Francisco and home. My father and I, before I was married, went out to Helena where we have relatives out there.

STERLING: Is that right?

SHAW: I've had this sense or feeling of history for many years. I think that's the reason why I was interested in this early history. This, of course, doesn't really affect Joliet, but I'm going to tell it anyway. I don't think it will hurt. In 1864 a fellow by the name of Franklin Luther Kirkaldie left Joliet to go to Montana to make his fortune. There was a gold rush on there. He hadn't done very well here. He had lived in Vermont, I guess, that's where he came from, and had worked in some kind of industry where the dust wasn't good for his lungs. Well, he came here and married Elizabeth Risley. The Risleys had some kind of business here. I used to see mention of it in the papers when I was doing the thesis, so I knew of the Risleys; and I knew of them from my father's mention of them. Well, he went out to Montana and wasn't much of a success there either, but he wrote letters back and finally managed to get his family out there. His wife Lizzie and the children went out in May of 1869 by train, I guess to Corinne, Utah, then north. It took two or three weeks to get north by wagon train. There was one child born after

the family was reunited. Well, in the middle 1880's when my dad was a boy of about 15 or 16, he spent the summer with the Kirkaldies on the Sun River in Montana. I wish now I had asked him a lot of questions. Montana then was the frontier of American History, American life. It was past the age of the California Gold Rush. The gold rushes had been over. I guess in the 1880's there was a gold rush to Colorado, and my grandfather was in on that, unsuccessfully. The Kirkaldies were out there trying to make a living on farming, and father had a wonderful time. He never really came right out and said it, but I think that that may have been a high point of his life. Nothing gave him anymore pleasure, let's put it that way. I never understood how his mother let him out of her sight. Of course, he did things out there that he would never in the wide world have let my brother and me do: Riding over the open range for two or three days, just sleeping out under the stars and in the rain, or whatever; he never would have let us do that. But with the Kirkaldie boys, who knew their way around, it was fine. Well, I thought that father knew the Kirkaldie boys before he went out there. But father wasn't born till September 1869, so they had all left for Montana. Well, the families were acquainted, and that's how it happened. Then I had an idea in the back of my mind that maybe we were related to them. Well, my wife brought out some papers in a big envelope with my name on it, if I had known about them before, I forgot them completely. They're about the geneology of the Shaws. Well, I found that my grandfather was a first cousin of this Frank Kirkaldie, so they were related. Well, the Kirkaldies and the Shaws have a very distant relationship now. But anyway, not long ago, a couple of years ago, my cousin Bob Wallace in Helena, sent me the Montana State Historical Society Journal with an article in it quoting a lot of these letters that Frank wrote back to his wife Lizzie

here in Illinois. Her letters to him were not preserved, but evidently she had saved his letters. She lived to be ninety-nine and one-half years old. /Laughter/ She must have been a wonderful woman. It was a long article quoting from a lot of these letters, and it really aroused my interest; and it was not written by any of the Kirkaldie family. It mentioned in a box, in connection with the article, several Kirkaldies who are interested in the family and are keeping track of the members. So I wrote to three of them and I've been having interesting correspondence with them. Two that I wrote to replied; the third one didn't. But somewhere, some other Kirkaldie, a woman by the name of Mrs. Baker, got my name and she wrote to me. She comes from a collateral line of Frank's brothers. It goes a long way back. So I have been having some interesting correspondence. You see, this nation has always been in a remarkable state of flux. Some families get settled down and stay for generations, but others just scatter all over the face of the country. But a lot of the Kirkaldies have remained in Montana. That bit of history interested me. Now I'm trying to find out still more. My grandfather was married twice. He had a daughter, Ella, by the first marriage. My grandmother was his second wife, and my father was the son of this second wife. Ella went out to Montana and married a Wallace. Now I'm trying to find out why Ella left home. I have a sneaking suspicion that she couldn't stand her step-mother, /Laughter/ because my grandmother was very difficult. I'm trying to find out if that's why she went. She died in 1890 of tuberculosis. She had two children. I am trying to find out if my grandmother went to Helena and spent the summer with her step-daughter and husband while my father was out on the range. But I haven't found out.

STERLING: Did your grandfather serve in the Civil War?

SHAW: Not that I know of.

STERLING: Maybe he might have enlisted, /Laughter/ to get away.

SHAW: He had an aunt by the name Rockylena, "R-O-C-K-Y-L-E-N-A," Rockylena. I think it's awful to inflict a name like that on an innocent little baby girl. But Rockylena was the mother of this Frank Kirkaldie, and his brother, James. So that was how we were related. But there was also another girl in the family name Tryphena, T-R-Y-P-H-E-N-A, Tryphena Shaw. Then we had ordinary names like Calvin. /Laughter/ But my grandmother always used to say, I didn't know if she was right or not, that my grandfather's mother was named Nancy Fay, so she named her son Fayette. Well, in this genealogy, it shows that his mother's name was Nancy Faye, so I guess my grandmother was right on that. My Grandmother Shaw was a Chase; she came from Maine. She lived to be 87, and until the day of her death, she kept some traces of that Maine accent. I never did get to visit her birthplace. Well, her birthplace burned down for one thing, but I would like to have gone to the town. Now, I wonder, a lot of that had been personal, probably boring, but I wonder what else.

STERLING: What was the waterway like when you were a boy?

SHAW: It stunk! Chicago sewage. /Laughter/ Some of us, in the days before we worried about pollution, thought that it was a delightful smell. Mary Weeks, with whom we grew up, said she used to hear her folks and other grown-ups say how awful that was, that smell from the canal. She said, "I thought it was wonderful." /Laughter/ I didn't think it was so bad, unless it got awfully strong. But on a warm Sunday night, or on a warm summer night, I mean, when there wasn't much wind, that odor of sewage would spread out over the city on the East Side, which was lower than the

West Side, the hills, you know, and that sewer gas would just spread out all along through that valley and oh! It wasn't quite stifling, because, of course, we did survive, but it was pretty strong sometimes. I didn't mind it too much; but, of course, Chicago has had to put in sewage disposal plants, and I must admit it's an improvement /laughter/. I don't know that you could go swimming in it though.

STERLING: Well, I've run across several old pictures which show people fishing off the Jefferson Street bridge. That was before your time, I take it.

SHAW: Well, yes. You know I have never figured out where the canal and the Des Plaines River come together. Somewhere the Des Plaines has to cross the waterway, and I haven't really figured it out yet. I suppose if I got a map and sat down and looked at it carefully, I would know. But, I think that Chicago made the Chicago River turn around and flow this way just since 1900.

STERLING: I think it's been recently.

SHAW: And those pictures you referred to are probably before that. So we weren't getting Chicago sewage.

STERLING: It was going the other way. Were the bridges, when you were a boy, like they are now?

SHAW: No. Of course, this lakes-to-gulf waterway was put through in the 1930's. That's when these modern bridges were put in.

STERLING: What were the bridges like before then?

SHAW: Oh, old-fashioned steel structures.

STERLING: I've also seen pictures of the dam down near Jackson Street, I think.

SHAW: There was one.

STERLING: Was there one there?

SHAW: The Jackson Street dam. That has been taken out. Now I don't know when that was taken out, but probably when the waterway was made an official Lakes-to-Gulf waterway.

STERLING: There was no fishing or swimming in there when you were a boy.

SHAW: Oh, no! /Laughter/ And yet, you know my father built a motor boat in the winter of 1907-08 in the barn there on Union Street. He had to put a bustle on the barn, because it was a 25-foot boat and it was too long for the barn. He launched it in the spring in the old canal. Now in those days, the canal and the river were separate. The river was turbulent; there was a strong current in it; but the canal was to the west of the river. Now there again, I guess going north, you could go up to the Butterfly Dam or go up to one of those dams in Lockport, and there you could get on to the Lake Michigan level and go into Chicago. Well, anyway, the canal was navigable for a good many miles. The old canal hadn't been a bad one in those days. I think as late as 1916, there was business on the canal. Well, anyway, when our launch was put in the old canal, we used to go out on picnics on it. I can remember that. And I remember the pleasure boats on that old canal. I was just a tyke, you know, a little kid, awfully nice, though. /Laughter/ I can remember south of

town where, I suppose you'd call them houseboats, I don't think people lived on them, but they were sort of pavillions where you picknicked. And there were launches and motor boats; they didn't have the kind of speed boats they do now, these fancy, scientifically-designed boats. They had hulls pointed in the end to go through the water. They don't use that term "launch" anymore; though the Navy does, as it launches. But, anyway, every launch was an individual custom-made thing. My father had these plans and he built the launch in the barm. I don't know what the horse did. /Laughter/ But we used to go on picnics on the old waterway, on the old canal, and I can remember coming in one day landing the boat, just before a thunderstorm was raging. I don't know why I even remember little details like that, but you do. So, I don't know whether it was Chicago sewage then or not, but certainly later on in the '20's and in the '30's, it was Chicago sewage.

STERLING: Along Eastern Avenue there, there were some nice big homes. Wasn't that the "silk stocking" district?

SHAW: Yes,. In recent years, I'd say, the West Side has become the "right address." In the earlier years, it wasn't so much though, because Cass Street along Eastern Avenue, and along Richards Street there was some lovely homes. That Brown Lincoln Hotel was once a private residence of a banker, George Woodruff. It was remodeled into a hotel; as a private residence it was much more attractive than it is now. There were some beautiful big homes that have been torn down. The old-fashioned kind, that were big and roomy and attractive. Well, I don't know if you would call them attractive now, but they were supposed to be.

STERLING: Yes. I recently went through a home on Eastern Avenue about one block north of Cass Street on the right hand side. It has big pillars out in front.

SHAW: North of Cass Street. Yes.

STERLING: I don't know whose home that used to be. It's a three-story home; it has. . .

SHAW: On the West side or the East side?

STERLING: On the East side of the street.

SHAW: I wonder if that would be the Vance home? Well, anyway. . .

STERLING: It has marble fireplaces in it, oh, three of them. It was just a beautiful place.

SHAW: It still is?

STERLING: Yes, it's in a Mexican neighborhood now. I went through it; it's up for sale. I wasn't planning to buy it. I was just nosing around to see what it looked like. It still is in pretty good shape.

SHAW: You know that big mansion near First Avenue on Eastern, don't you?

STERLING: Yes.

SHAW: Is that up for sale?

STERLING: I don't know if it's up for sale. I know they conducted tours through it, though.

SHAW: It used to be a funeral home, and then two fellows bought it and

refurbished it and furnished it. A banker Jacob Henry built it about 1875, I think. It cost about \$75,000 way back, when \$2500 was an expensive home anyway. I hope that somehow that can be preserved. Even if those fellows don't want to keep it. I don't see how they can keep a place like that.

STERLING: Not unless you have a lot of money. Do you recall your dad's first car?

SHAW: It was a Model T Ford. He got it Labor Day, 1910.

STERLING: Is that right?

SHAW: I have only vague recollections of it. He had a couple of Model T's. I wish we had it now. Then he had a Haynes, which you never heard of. I don't know how long it was made. I guess it was made over in Kokomo, Indiana. I was just a kid, but it was a good size car. You don't remember the days when the back seat was big enough so that you had jump seats. You could fit three across comfortably, but then you'd have two little seats, which would fold against the sides or -- when you wanted to use them -- they'd swing out and accommodate two people. So that you had a seven-passenger car, two in front, two on the jump seats, and three in back. Later the jump seats came down from the back of the front seats. That back seat of the car was really capacious. There was room for a winter garden, and then the fenders stuck out in addition to the body in the car. Of course, I think it is sensible to have the car body wide enough for three people in front, three in back and fenders somehow included. And the trunk of the car, of course, sat on a platform at the back; but the body of the car ended this way instead of the streamlined. I knew a little girl when I was teaching in Toledo; she was a teacher, too. She had a car with

one of these trunks, and she had a rattle in the car, a clunking. She had it in the garage a couple of times; she said she just couldn't figure it out. The garage men, the mechanics, couldn't figure it out either. She said it sounds exactly as if there were a bunch of golf clubs, somewhere there. She opened the trunk one day come spring, and there were the golf clubs. /Laughter/ and they had been doing all that clunking. /Laughter/

STERLING: She had it diagnosed correctly.

SHAW: And described it accurately. /Laughter/ That was what was wrong with it!

STERLING: When you were young, were you aware of politics in Joliet?

SHAW: No.

STERLING: Do you recall any of the mayors or any of the political controversies?

SHAW: No, I don't. Except there was a Mayor Barber, who was said to be a very good mayor. He was from one of the first families. No, I wasn't much aware of the politics. The country was largely Republican. Out here were lots of Germans. In this whole Eastern part. I can remember hearing German spoken in the courthouse. It wasn't generally spoken; I mean, they spoke it among themselves. You didn't hear it very much, but I remember hearing it spoken in the corridors in the courthouse. But I guess the city would usually go Democratic; but the surrounding county would more likely be Republican. I didn't have much interest in politics, political parties.

STERLING: The German population in the area, how did they react to World War I? Do you recall that?

SHAW: For the most part they were loyal, I think. You see, the Germans had come over here as a result of the failure of a German revolution in 1848. Well, Great Britain began to import grain from the praries here rather than from the north German plain. So the German farmers were beginning to lose markets, and then Germany was afflicted by potato blight as Ireland was. But Ireland starved, and a lot of Germans came over here. Some of these German people settled in the Eastern part of the County, Peotone, Frankfort, and so on. Did you know Vera Smith there? She was a Stellwagon. I called her Vera Kohlhagen one day and she was ready to slap me. She and I have been friends for many years. She came from out here originally, and I don't know whether she still has relatives out here or not.

STERLING: But the Germans were loyal during World War I? There was no....

SHAW: Yes, I think so. I wasn't aware of any unpatriotic sentiments.

STERLING: We interviewed one woman who was a school teacher in a small community southwest of here where it was heavily German. She said that it was her first teaching job, and she recalled how a group of Germans came over to the school and ripped down the American flag when they heard that war had been declared on Germany. There was quite a little scene there. I just wondered whether similar occurrences might have come to your attention.

SHAW: Well, I don't doubt that that did happen, but I don't remember anything about it.

STERLING: Yes.

SHAW: I do know this, that they discontinued teaching German in high school.

Miss Mather, the German teacher, had to teach Domestic Science, and I think that things that were related to Germany were pretty much stifled as far as the school systems were concerned. I remember seeing the contingents of soldiers going off to war in glory and all that sort of thing, the Band seeing them off and so on.

STERLING: You were too young for that though.

SHAW: Oh, I was too young for the First World War and too old for the Second. /Laughter/ But as far as being too old for the Second, I got turned down because I have a defective heart and I've since had open heart surgery.

STERLING: Oh, is that right?

SHAW: It corrected the congenital defect. It hasn't cured everything, but at least I'm alive still. I was only supposed to live to be two years old and I disappointed everybody and did. And then I wasn't supposed to live beyond five and I disappointed everybody again and did. So they gave up. /Laughter/ There was a hole in the septum of my heart where there shouldn't have been a hole. The septum is the wall of the heart that divides the two sides. The blood was pouring through there instead of going out through the aorta. So in 1965, when I was 61 years old, a doctor at Presbyterian-St. Luke's went in and closed that hole. I said, "Are you going to do it with scotch tape?" He said, no, he was going to use teflon from DuPont. The heart is very much enlarged, grew that way over the years to compensate and it's not going to grow any smaller. But I have a reasonably normal pulse now. I'm fortunate to be still percolating.

STERLING: Do you remember any Klan activity in Joliet in the '20's?

SHAW: No. I read about it in the papers, but not as related to the local area. Now was there any here?

STERLING: I'm not sure. We interviewed one Black man, and he said that he wasn't aware of it. I've seen pictures of the Klan in the '20's carrying American flags down city streets getting donations that way. I know a little about the Resurgence of the Klan in the 1920's, but i don't personally know whether it was strong in this area or not.

SHAW: Well, I can't remember any.

STERLING: I don't think there was much of a Black population in Joliet until around World War II.

SHAW: Yes, there wasn't much. But we use to have and still do have some some people would call "nigger dumps," just run-down areas. But you know, there's something going on that isn't in the script. Black areas or areas that have turned Black are being improved. Have you noticed that? Oh, some old homes along Eastern Avenue where there's been deterioration, are being fixed up.

STERLING: Yes.

SHAW: Do you know that little York Avenue there from the Union Station south right along railroad? That used to be the most run-down place. A lot of those homes have been fixed up a little so that they. . . you just can't imagine how they used to be for years.

STERLING: Where did blacks live when you were young?

SHAW: Well, along York Avenue there, and South Ottawa Street, not so much

around South Chicago, but Blacks are coming in now close to where I used to live along Eastern and Second Avenue and along Richards Street there. That was all white. But I grew up with Blacks in my class, only a minority though. I never objected to them. We had a very brilliant boy in class, Albert Dunham. His sister, Catherine Dunham, was a dancer. Have you heard of her?

STERLING: Yes.

SHAW: Albert died, I don't know why. I don't know what happened to him, but in Joliet he was among the brightest students in the school system, all the way through high school. I think that so far as he was concerned, there was practically no color line. The school-mates accepted him and he went on to the University of Chicago, I think. Then I just wonder if when he got out in the world away from here, he found that Blacks were not accepted, and if that maybe contributed in some way to his death. I don't know.

STERLING: Were you in the band in high school?

SHAW: No, my brother was.

STERLING: We had one interview, the same Black man, where he pointed out that as far as he could see as a youngster, the only discrimination that he came up against was in the band. He wanted to be a musician; but because of his color, he wasn't permitted in the Joliet Township High School Band. The reason given at that time was that whenever the band would travel they would have to stay at places that wouldn't permit Blacks to stay in the same place.

SHAW: I hadn't thought of that, but I don't doubt that it's true.

STERLING: I guess they permitted him and other Blacks to play in the orchestra because that didn't travel. I don't know when the first Black was in the band.

SHAW: Well, until the Second World War, we didn't have a Black problem.

STERLING: So, you weren't in Joliet during the Depression?

SHAW: Yes, I was, part of the time. It was pretty rugged.

STERLING: Was it?

SHAW: My father made some unfortunate investments; it was difficult for us as well as others. Somehow we struggled through. Never did make the recovery we hoped to make.

STERLING: Were there any suicides in Joliet?

SHAW: From that, I don't know. I never heard of any. You used to hear of people killing themselves, oh, say in Chicago, New York, and so on; but I never personally knew of any such examples.

STERLING: Were you teaching, in the '20's, during the Depression?

SHAW: I was teaching off and on as a substitute, and I was an assistant half-time in Urbana at the University in 1931-32. Then '34-37 I was at Beloit.

STERLING: How did the Depression effect teachers in Joliet?

SHAW: I think for a little while they weren't. Their pay checks were a

little bit delayed, but eventually they got most of their pay; but their full pay was at a low level. As you know, teachers were poorly paid until just the last few years anyway. I don't think they suffered too much. They, if they were fortunate enough to have jobs as teachers, weren't suffering.

STERLING: You attended Junior College?

SHAW: Yes. Well, I was born in 1903. I graduated from eighth grade in 1918, and the day of my graduation I think I felt the most important that I have ever felt in my life, 1918. I remember Armistice Day. Then I graduated from high school in 1922, from Junior College in '24, and from Illinois in '26. Then I had two years at Harvard, but I went back from time to time and finished up in a absentia. But I didn't get a doctorate until 1936, ten years after I was out of Illinois. I don't know if it was worth it or not. I'm glad now that I have it, but if I were to look forward to it again, with all that to go through and the long time it takes, I don't know whether I want to or not.

STERLING: I'm in the same situation right now. I've written nine chapters of my thesis, and I'm in the revision stage and rewrite stage and so forth on.

SHAW: What school and what subject?

STERLING: At Northern Illinois in Civil War, American History. I'm doing a study of conscription, of the draft during the Civil War. I took my masters from Northern Illinois in '67 and started teaching at the Junior College in '67.

SHAW: Here?

STERLING: Yes. I have been working on the doctorate part-time, piece-meal, ever since.

SHAW: Have you got your general examinations behind you?

STERLING: Yes. Yes.

SHAW: Well, as long as you're that far along, oh, by all means, go on and finish, because it does mean preferment and probably higher pay.

STERLING: Yes, it will mean an increase at the Junior College. Of course, at the Junior College we're on a pay schedule where you move up the steps depending upon teaching experience and education.

SHAW: Then you have more to decide. At top level universities where they are pushing back the frontiers of knowledge and learning, research and writing are important. And your promotions depend upon your producing there.

STERLING: Yes.

SHAW: At other schools, where teaching is emphasized, the research and writing are not so important. I think teachers should realize that there is that difference. I didn't do research and writing that the University of Illinois calls for, but I was a legacy from Navy Pier where that wasn't being done. I wouldn't be able to stay at the University of Illinois now without having the tenure that I had. But if you are going to make good at a big school like Illinois, Michigan, Stanford, UCLA, Harvard, Princeton, Yale, and so on, you will have to keep everlastingly at it in research and writing. Prospective teachers should make up their minds if that is the kind of pressure they want to submit to and endure,

and it is something to endure, or whether they want to teach. And then of course, there is the third category of administration. I know this, that if I were going on or going through it again to be a teacher, I would be in the teaching end and not make any pretense at research and writing. I might do some research and writing, but not feel under the obligation of having to do it because my tenure here depends on it.

STERLING: In the Junior College movement, of course, the emphasis has been on teaching, and there is no pressure to write. In fact, there's very little time to write. /Laughter/

SHAW: Yes.

STERLING: That's my problem now. Our teaching load is 15 hours a week.

SHAW: Three-hour classes?

STERLING: Yes, five three-hour classes.

SHAW: You can't do research and writing with that.

STERLING: No, there's just not much time for it.

SHAW: Exams drive me nuts!

STERLING: Oh!

SHAW: What subjects do you teach?

STERLING: I teach U.S. History; I'm Chairman of the Social Science Department, so I do have a reduced teaching load. But I teach two survey courses of U.S. History plus this local History class, which we just started a year and a half ago. I'm scrambling around trying to find my

bearings in this area. I find it very interesting, but, as I said, we are using this rather new approach, oral history. There's not, to be honest, too much available, good things in writing available on the history of this area. /Laughter/ If it wasn't for your dissertation, I don't know where we would be. Woodruff for the older period is pretty good.

SHAW: Well, I used Woodruff a lot.

STERLING: Yes, Woodruff is good.

SHAW: And Maue just cribbed out of Woodruff.

STERLING: Yes. Right, right. And one volume of his is just, you know, biographical sketches, where people submitted their own. /Laughter/ Did you have access to any other collections of letters or diaries or things of that sort?

SHAW: Well, Miss Clow let me read that Clow diary, the original, and I want to find out where it is. I must go and see her. She's 91 now; and she won't be around long. I would like to think that whoever has it will permit it to be copied to be put in either the library or the Will County Historical Society. You know, the Will County Historical Society has the old canal headquarters in Lockport. They have the safe that the trustees kept their valuables in and that's fireproof. So they can keep things there. I would like to get the Clow diary in there, and also I would like to have it in the public library. And there is a guide to Joliet published, well, I forget when, but Mary Heilbrun wrote to me at Crystal Lake a year ago. She saw references to it in my thesis, and she asked me where I got it. I told her I wasn't sure. It may have been the

Newberry Library.

STERLING: Well, thank you for the valuable leads. I'll contact the Newberry Library to see if they do have the Clow diary. It's been very enjoyable talking with you, and I want to thank you for sharing your memories with us.

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